

Everett/Snohomish County Continuum of Care

Overview of Coordinated Entry and Assessment Policy and Process

I. Overarching Policy

The Everett/Snohomish County Continuum of Care (CoC) will operate a Coordinated Entry and Assessment (CEA) system in conformance with 24 CFR 578, Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Continuum of Care Program Interim Final Rule published in Vol. 77 No. 147 of the *Federal Register* on July 31, 2012. The CEA will support the purpose of the Continuum of Care program which is to: promote community wide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness; provide funding for efforts by nonprofit providers and state and local governments to quickly rehouse homeless individuals and families while minimizing the trauma and dislocation caused to homeless individuals, families, and communities by homelessness; promote access to and effective utilization of mainstream programs by homeless individuals and families; and optimize self-sufficiency among individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

The CEA system will have all the characteristics of a Centralized or Coordinated Assessment System as defined at §578.3: "...a centralized or coordinated process designed to coordinate program participant intake assessment and provision of referrals. A centralized or coordinated assessment system covers the geographic area, is easily accessed by individuals and families seeking housing or services, is well advertised, and includes a comprehensive and standardized assessment tool."

All projects included in the Everett/Snohomish County Continuum of Care inventory as maintained by Snohomish County Department of Human Services/Division of Housing and Community Services/Office of Housing and Homeless Services (OCHS) will participate in the CEA system.

II. Background

Since 2009, Snohomish County has been engaged in a community-wide strategic planning and implementation process to transform systems and reduce homelessness. An assessment of data regarding homeless typologies as well as the housing stock, prevention and intervention services available, and funding streams has been undertaken. Goals and strategies have been identified and a coordinated entry and assessment pilot project was initiated. Since 2009, the CoC Coordinated Entry and Assessment system was being phased in as a rolling expansion to cover all of the Everett/Snohomish County CoC geographic area.

The coordinated entry implementation phase started with a small group of providers that tested the effectiveness of using a standardized coordinated entry process which connected households with a wide range of services to respond to their assessed needs. The service delivery system that was piloted featured:

- 1) Prevention strategies aimed at keeping households on the edge of homelessness housed and linked with appropriate services.
- 2) Standardized, uniform CEA tools and processes aimed at providing consistent, effective and swift access to the most appropriate needed services.
- 3) Rapid housing aimed at helping homeless households quickly exit homelessness and stabilize in permanent housing.
- 4) Tailored services to provide the right services at the right level and the right time to meet households' needs.
- 5) Economic opportunities including aggressive engagement with Workforce Snohomish, the Local Workforce Investment Board (LWIB); the public workforce investment system known as WorkSource; Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) WorkFirst; and supported employment services that help households advance toward self-sufficiency.
- 6) Data and Evaluation enhancements to inform planning and decision-making.

The experiences of pilot partners and households served as a catalyst for making next step improvements in the CEA and service delivery. In late 2012 the system began expanding to new CEA sites. Additional expansion and capacity building activities are designed to expand the reach of CEA, allow for easy access, and cover all populations/subpopulations of households/individuals who are experiencing homelessness or are at imminent risk of homelessness.

III. Coordinated Entry and Assessment Process

The CEA system provides multiple points for access and appropriate assessment for subpopulations, while maintaining standardized processes and tools. Each customized CEA path allows for eligibility screening for housing and services available only to specific subpopulations. CEA sites also allow for screening and assessment for housing/services that are available to households and individuals that do not fit the criteria for dedicated housing/services or, if the specialized resources are not available, to those persons who are eligible for them.

- 1) CEA overall coordination is done by the CEA Manager collectively with key stakeholders representing housing, services, and subpopulations.
- 2) CEA for families and individuals currently done through multiple core sites and mini sites.
- 3) CEA Navigators that serve families and individuals are assigned regionally within the CoC area.
- 4) Additional, CEA Navigators with specific expertise are assigned to certain subpopulations.
- 5) Chronic Homeless CEA is linked to the Chronic Homeless and Encampment Team. The Team consists of providers from the Pathways in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) program, Catholic Community Services (CCS), and Volunteers of America (VOA). These agencies are the primary stakeholders providing specific services and housing for households or individuals who meet the definition for chronically homeless.
- 6) Veterans CEA ensures Veterans are screened and assessed for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits, VASH, and any specific veterans housing. Veterans not eligible for VA benefits are screened and assessed for other housing or services.
- 7) For youth under 18, CEA is done by Cocoon House.
- 8) Families and individuals fleeing domestic violence are referred to Domestic Violence Services of Snohomish County (DVSSC) to first address safety concerns. A DV Navigator/Resource Specialist is available to work with households/individuals or other CEA staff or agency staff in the provision of housing and DV or other services as appropriate.

Standardized Provision of Intake and Triage Services at Core Sites

Households' needs are assessed through a uniform intake assessment at all core sites. The CEA tools consist of the following:

- 1) HMIS Intake questions and uniform intake assessment that is comprised of 20 questions. This initial screening and assessment determines if the household is homeless or at imminent risk, starts identifying needs for services, and provides the data necessary for HMIS entry.
- 2) Additional assessment questions to more fully identify needs and strengths to determine the best fit housing or services.
- 3) Fenn-Jorstad Self-Sufficiency Matrix (Matrix). The assessment results are summarized through the Matrix, developed by Snohomish County and designed to be objective in nature. Service cross-walks are being built out from the domains.

- 4) Additional more in-depth assessments are completed as needed, such as assessments of mental health, chemical dependency, and employment readiness.
- 5) Possible eligibility for housing and services is identified through CEA and referrals made to the most appropriate resource available.
- 6) Tailored services partnership agreements are in place and more are being developed to address the needs of persons coming through CEA.

Standardized Provision of Comprehensive Assessment and Eligibility/Referral by CEA Navigators

The CEA process includes access to Navigators and is currently available through nine core sites. These sites offer households with emergent housing and service needs access to coordinated diversion, prevention, and Rapid Re-Housing services through a Navigator, along with direct referrals to tailored services by coordinated entry service partners, including landlord dispute resolution and family mediation, civil legal assistance, mental health and chemical dependency services, and a range of employment and job training programs. The Navigator's role is to use a comprehensive housing and services assessment to determine a household's next step referral needs. Navigators have two primary objectives in the CEA system: 1) to help homeless and unstably housed individuals and families obtain appropriate, safe, and stable housing as quickly as possible and 2) to provide direct referrals to a range of services to address the household's current housing crisis as well as other assessed needs. In addition to providing direct services to homeless and unstably housed individuals and families, Navigators also serve as a resource for information about housing programs and strategies to other service providers in the community.

The following typology shall be used by the CEA Navigators to guide the development of a plan to address all service needs and for the provision of housing services following the comprehensive assessment.

Housing Crisis/Typology	Response	Services
Household is unstably housed but currently living in a safe, temporary situation; Low barriers to housing retention.	Diversion	Help household identify temporary options for housing until a permanent option can be secured. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short-term rental assistance • Utility assistance • Landlord conciliation • Conflict resolution with neighbors

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referrals to other appropriate services: employment, counseling, financial life skills, etc. to improve housing stability
Household reports they are safe in their current living situation, have received an eviction notice and will be homeless without assistance; Households selected for prevention assistance should have very low income and priority given to those who exited RRH in the last 2-years or have previously resided in emergency shelter or transitional housing or experienced homelessness within the past 12 months.	Prevention	<p>Identify whether household has received an eviction notice only or also a court summons or writ of restitution and whether the tenancy has been jeopardized due to non-payment of rent, lease violations, or nuisance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short-term rental assistance • Civil legal assistance • Landlord conciliation • Conflict resolution with neighbors • Referrals to other appropriate services: employment, counseling, financial life skills, etc. to improve housing stability • Exit planning to identify how households will maintain stability once assistance ends
Households may be currently homeless or imminently losing housing but individuals and families with an identified prior residence as living in a place not meant for human habitation and lacking a support network with no	Emergency Shelter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency shelter for up to 90 days; preferably 30 days or less • Address the most immediate and manageable barriers to housing stability

<p>other options or resources for housing will be prioritized; Due to moderate to high/multiple barriers or current circumstances, diversion or prevention are not appropriate options</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist individuals and families in obtaining permanent housing
<p>Households with an identified prior residence as residing in a place not meant for human habitation and who cannot be more appropriately served by another housing program or system of care, lack a support network and have no other options or resources for housing; Low barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> good rental history or eviction more than three years ago limited criminal history not recent Able to immediately gain and maintain employment: no disabling conditions 	Short-Term Rapid Re-Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing location and advocacy Apartment application fees Move in costs Short-term rental assistance up to three months Referrals to other appropriate services: employment, counseling, financial life skills, etc. to improve housing stability Exit planning to identify how households will maintain stability once assistance ends
<p>Households with an identified prior residence as residing in a place not meant for human habitation and who cannot be more appropriately served by another housing program or system of care, lack a support network and have no other options or resources for housing; Moderate Barriers:</p>	Medium-Term Rapid Re-Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing location and advocacy Apartment application fees Move in costs Medium-term rental assistance up to twenty four months In-home case management services at least once per month

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • single parent with two or more children under the age of five • evictions or significant criminal history in recent past • manageable mental or physical health issues • ability to gain and maintain employment 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referrals to other appropriate services: employment, counseling, financial life skills, etc. to improve housing stability • Exit planning to identify how households will maintain stability once assistance ends
<p>Households may be currently homeless or imminently losing housing. Primary for youth, DV, and those needing more intensive services for a temporary time due to substance abuse and households with high or multiple barriers that need time to prepare for independent living. Other housing options are not appropriate (e.g. RRH) or they do not meet eligibility criteria (e.g. PSH):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extensive criminal background • open CPS case • no GED or high school diploma • young families with children • extremely poor rental histories (multiple evictions, serious damage to rental units) • no ability to gain and maintain employment without significant assistance 	<p>Transitional Housing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive services must be made available to residents throughout the duration of their residence in the project. • Services must be necessary to assist program participants obtain and maintain permanent housing • Exit planning to identify how households will maintain stability once placed in permanent housing

<p>Households living with disabling conditions that substantially impact one or more major life areas and need long term supportive services and financial assistance.</p> <p>Of households/individuals that are eligible for PSH, priority is given to those experiencing chronic homelessness.</p>	<p>Permanent Supportive Housing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide supportive services for the residents which enable them to live as independently as is practicable throughout the duration of their residence in the project. • Permanent Supportive Housing is intended to be available to participants for as long as it provides housing assistance which meets their needs.